

Fright Night by [memory_vacant](#)

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Summary:

Eddie Kaspbrak slowly falls for the vampire next door.

1. You're So Cool, Kaspbrak

Author's Note:

This is literally my first, and longest, fanfiction ever. Richie and Eddie have stolen my heart and I need them to be happy.

Based loosely off of the 1985 film, *Fright Night*, so there are a few references to that hidden in here.

After an excruciatingly long day at work, there wasn't a lot that Eddie Kaspbrak wanted to do. He would be more than content if he could make it home, eat, shower, and sleep without any interruptions.

More than anything, though, he needed a shower. That day, two restaurants had violated so many health codes that Eddie felt no remorse in giving them a failing grade. He could practically feel the dirt and grime on his skin as he pulled up to his house.

He had barely stepped out of the car when his roommate Bill came running down the porch steps towards him.

"Eddie! Guess wh-what!" he grabbed Eddie's shoulders and shook him excitedly, a bright smile plastered across his face. Eddie attempted a frustrated sigh, but it turned into a laugh as Bill continued to stare at him with wild eyes. Eddie rolled his own and relented.

"What is it, Bill?" Eddie stepped past him and started to make his way to the door. "If you knew what kind of day I've had—"

"The house next door got sold," Bill said simply. Eddie stopped dead in his tracks, hand on the door handle. He had heard Bill perfectly fine, and yet—

"What?" Eddie balked, waiting for Bill to say it was all a joke. He didn't. "That place has to be covered in black mold. Someone actually bought it?" He turned to inspect the topic of conversation: a nearly

decrepit, two-story house beside their own. It had been vacant since they moved in.

“That’s what M-Mike told me. He ran into the r-realtor when he left this m-morning. She said some guy b-bought it to fix it up.”

Eddie ran a hand through his hair, considering. The Victorian-style building was an eyesore, overrun with vines and tall weeds. Eddie would get a shudder up his spine whenever he imagined what kind of vermin infested the place; how many rat droppings and spider webs must cover the insides. He couldn’t deny that the thought of someone actually cleaning it up was refreshing, though unbelievable. However, picturing the filth that riddled the house next door suddenly made Eddie hyper-aware of how grimy he felt. He gave one last disbelieving look before stepping into the house.

“I guess I’m glad someone’s gonna do it.” Eddie finally said, moving upstairs. “But if I don’t take a shower like right now, I’m going to explode.”

He caught the last moments of the sunset when he stepped out of the shower. He watched it out his window, getting dressed and as he did. The smell of cooking wafted up through the house, and Eddie remembered how hungry he was.

He had barely reached the bottom of the stairs when he heard a sharp, pained intake of breath from the kitchen.

“Fuck!” Bill yelled. Eddie hastened his steps.

“Bill! You okay?” He rounded the corner in time for Bill to turn and face him; the look in his eyes transforming from pained to panicked as he noticed Eddie.

“No, no Eddie, d-don’t look.” Eddie, never a good listener, followed the line of Bill’s left arm down to his hand where blood rushed over his fingers. Eddie didn’t have time to consider how Bill must have slipped while cutting the veggies, he didn’t have time to want to help Bill, instead he watched as the kitchen became a blur of colors and his eyes slipped back into his head. And he most definitely did not hear Bill curse once again as his legs buckled out from under him.

Eddie woke up to the living room fan whirring above him; he slowly reasoned that he must be laying on their couch. His knees ached and a small bruise was surely forming on the left side of his face. He touched both offending areas gently and hissed at the pain. Just then, Bill came rushing in with a glass of water. He stopped short once he realized that Eddie was awake. Bill handed him the glass and told him to drink; he sat at Eddie's feet, holding up his now-bandaged hand.

"I was c-cutting the onions and I must've m-miscalculated. I tried to stop you... s-sorry." Eddie quickly regarded the excess of gauze that wrapped around Bill's index finger. He couldn't be sure, but he was almost certain that Bill used more than he needed for Eddie's sake. More gauze means less risk of the blood seeping through. Eddie wanted to thank him, but the mental image of blood made the nauseous feeling creep back. He had to stop thinking about it.

"You carried me to the couch?" Eddie asked, taking a sip of the water.

"Hey, I m-may be shorter than you, b-but I'm not th-that w-weak. I couldn't l-leave you on the floor." He said, patting Eddie's shoulder with his uninjured hand. "I d-did finish dinner, though. Y-you should eat, Eh-Eddie."

Bill brought the food to the living room. Eddie complained that they shouldn't be eating on their couches (he bought cream colored couches and they were going to stay cream colored, dammit), but Bill simply maintained that Eddie shouldn't be moving just yet.

They finished up and Eddie returned to his room. He immediately collapsed onto his bed. The only thing that could rectify the events of his shitty day, he thought, was a good night's sleep. Despite how heavy his eyelids had become, he glanced out his window again. He could see the side of the derelict Victorian home, and a cracked window directly across from his own. Both were shrouded in darkness. He was distantly aware that he'd have to actually start closing his curtain if someone was going to be living there.

He fell asleep wondering what their new neighbor would be like. The universe gave him an answer to that question three days later.

He was blessed with a short day at work, arriving back home around three in the afternoon. He was so enraptured by the idea of getting some long-awaited 'me time,' that he nearly didn't register the yellow sports car parked in front of the dilapidated building. It was clearly an older car, but still too nice-looking and too out of place.

Just as Eddie realized that he was staring rather rudely, a thin man with curly, light brown hair wandered out of the home, looking pensive. He shuffled through some papers in his hands and that pensive look started to resemble more of a long-suffering one. Before Eddie could reprimand himself for gawking (again), the man's eyes shot up, realizing he was being watched.

"Can I help you?" Eddie considered running away, pretending he hadn't heard or seen the man. It was an appealing thought, but this was most likely his new neighbor. There was no way he could give him a good first impression if the first impression he gave involved stalking away like a nervous child. He attempted a casual smile.

"Hey! I'm Eddie, I live at 248," he gestured to his house as some sort of explanation for his behavior. The man on the porch in front of him remained unimpressed. Eddie gave up. "I um- are you the new owner?"

"Not exactly, but I will be living here. Probably for a long time given the state of this place." He sighed, giving Eddie a once over. Possibly sensing Eddie's unease, the man relaxed and mercifully broke into a smile. He moved to Eddie, extending his hand. "My name's Stanley, Stanley Uris. You said your name was Eddie?"

The man, Stanley, had seemed so severe moments earlier, but his smile was so sincere and bright that Eddie couldn't hold back a smile of his own as they clasped hands.

"Yeah, Eddie Kaspbrak." He said, releasing Stanley's hand. "If you don't mind me asking," he searched for the right words; words that wouldn't sound judgmental, "why buy such a piece of junk?" Nailed it.

Stanley took pity on him and laughed. He considered Eddie's question. "My friend, Richie, he's the one that bought the place; I'm just his live-in carpenter. One day he up and decides he needs a change of pace, which means I get dragged to nowhereville Maine to do all the work while he sits on the couch and orders furniture off pier1.com."

Eddie wasn't going to even try and pretend that he understood everything about Stanley's situation.

"Oh geez, that's a lot to have to deal with." He finally mustered. He glanced towards the Victorian mess of a home behind Stanley. Wooden paneling that was once painted baby blue was now cracked and faded, the porch Stanley had stood on was bowed in the middle, not to mention that nearly every window was cracked. He really felt for the guy. "Where will you be staying while you work?"

Stanley's eyes shot up; bemusement spread across his face.

"Oh, that's the best part: we'll be staying here."

Eddie was at a complete loss for words. It was terrible enough that anyone should have to live in that crack house, but Stanley seemed like a genuinely sweet guy; Eddie hated the idea of it. His silence was deafening, and Stanley immediately understood the cause for it.

"I know it's hard to believe, but it doesn't look as bad on the inside." Eddie's disgust hadn't wavered, and Stanley found it very amusing. "You could come in and see for yourself, I don't mind giving you a tour."

Eddie was shaking his head. "No, no, no. I'm a health inspector so I've got a pretty good idea of what kind of awful things probably live in there. No, um, no offense." Stanley was smiling again.

"You have no idea... Well, Eddie, it was lovely to meet you, but I've got some stuff to do before the moving truck comes. Maybe once we've cleaned up a bit, you'll come visit us?" He was already backing through the tall grass.

"You'll have to get it really clean."

“Believe me, I’m not going to put up with two inches of dust for any longer than I have to.” He smiled that bright smile one last time before disappearing into the building.

When Bill got home, he was immediately accosted with Eddie’s story. Meeting Stanley had left Eddie uncharacteristically giddy, and Bill couldn’t blame him. For as long as they’d lived there, Eddie’s opinion on the neighboring house had oscillated between sheer indifference and heated contempt. Suddenly, there was an eagerness present; Eddie was eager to see the home renovated. Bill could only smile and listen.

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It was Mike and Bill’s weekly date night, so Eddie spent the rest of the evening alone. He lay in bed trying to pay attention to a movie he’d turned on, when he heard a faint chattering outside his window. He managed to mind his own business for a whole ten seconds before he skulked towards the sound. He used the curtain as cover, and peaked down at the stretch of grass that separated the two buildings. Eddie immediately spotted Stanley. He was moving towards the back yard, talking to someone that Eddie couldn’t see from his vantage point.

Before the figures below were completely out of sight, Eddie saw that they carried something large between them. A long, rectangular object with features obscured by the darkness. Whatever it was, it was too thin to be a bed, and too short to be a couch. Eddie’s imagination ran wild and filled in the gaps that his eyes couldn’t, and he didn’t like the answer he arrived at.

Stanley and the other man disappeared around the back of the house, and Eddie had to hope that a more rational explanation would emerge before morning.

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“A c-coffin?” Bill’s sleep-crusted eyes narrowed. “Eddie, it’s s-seven in the morning.”

“Trust me, I’m aware. I could hardly sleep cause I was trying to come

up with rational explanations for coffin transport in the dead of night. Just when I thought we lucked out with normal, clean neighbors; they lug in a fucking casket.” Eddie’s lips tightened into a frown; his hands were wrapped tight around a coffee mug filled with hot cocoa. He took a sip, hoping that Bill would say something logical.

“Eddie,” Bill rubbed a hand over his face, “how d-dark was it l-l-last night?”

“I mean... the streetlights were on, but I guess it wasn’t very—”

“And how m-much did y-you drink last night?” He directed Eddie’s attention to the empty bottle of wine that stuck out of the trash can.

“...I was having me time.” His dark eyebrows scrunched in defiance. “And I wasn’t that tipsy, Bill.”

“I b-believe you, Ed. But there’s n-no reason for you to g-get so wo-worked up when this c-could have been a b-box from Ikea.” He looked at Eddie with that brotherly sympathy he was so good at. “It w-was dark.”

Eddie sighed. He had polished off that entire bottle of rosé by himself; and the most logical conclusion that he had managed to conjure up was that Stanley or Richie had a penchant for macabre coffee tables. It was a weak explanation at best and Eddie knew it. Bill had to be right.

“You s-said that that Stan guy w-was nice; wh-why not just g-go over tonight and a-ask him about it?”

The idea had occurred to Eddie. But that was the problem; Stanley was nice. He didn’t want to insult him or weird him out. After all, what would he even say?

‘Hey, Stan the Man! Are you and your friend/roommate stowing coffins in your basement for a reason? Or was that ottoman just really long?’

Eddie’s uncertainty showed clearly on his face. Bill finished pouring himself a cup of coffee and turned to observe his friend. Finally, he

sighed; relenting.

“If I g-go with you will you a-ask them?”

“Please and thank you.”

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Bill was working late that day, of course. When Eddie made it home the sun was still in the sky. He'd have to wait several hours for Bill to join him, which was already proving to be an annoyance.

Eddie knew that it was stupid for him to care so much. So what if they owned a coffin? It was already abundantly clear that Stanley and Richie weren't necessarily normal people. After all, Eddie thought, they had readily decided to live in a glorified sty. Well, Richie had. Eddie couldn't condemn Stanley like that; he hadn't seemed particularly happy about his situation.

He knew he shouldn't care, he really did, but he wouldn't mind an explanation.

Besides, Bill wanted an excuse to meet the neighbors, and Eddie eagerly agreed that he should. Stanley was nice, and if Richie was anything like him, then Eddie could actually try and be excited. As it stood, however, Eddie was nervous. This was a harebrained idea, and Bill still wasn't home yet. All he could do was pace and peek out the window. Hardly any activity was visible next door, save for silhouetted figures moving behind curtained windows. Eddie was just about to take another look when he heard a car pull into the driveway.

Eddie practically rushed Bill back out their door as soon as he stepped in.

“You're the one that suggested this, let's go.” He ushered Bill down the stairs, and started him towards the neighboring home.

“You d-don't have to p-push, Eddie.” Bill shook himself out of Eddie's grasp, but continued on in the direction of their destination. It took only a moment for them to be climbing the eroded stairs; a moment more to be rapping gently on the door. They waited.

Finally, the ivory door lilted open. Stanley stood across from them, smiling widely once he recognized Eddie.

“Eddie, to what do I owe this pleasure?” He looked between Eddie and Bill expectantly. Eddie felt himself shrink, suddenly very aware of how ridiculous he was being. Maybe the coffin question was something to be worked up to.

“Hey!” he finally got out, “Oh, this is my friend Bill.” He stuck a thumb towards the man at his side.

“Very nice to meet you, Bill.” Stanley’s face became warm again as he clasped Bill’s outstretched hand. Eddie knew that he would most likely come to regret his next words, but he had made it this far, and a little bullshitting never hurt anyone.

“Sorry that it’s pretty late, but I was wondering if that offer was still on the table? The house tour? Me and Bill finally got too curious.” For a moment Eddie fully believed that Stanley would slam the door in their faces; he wouldn’t blame him if he did. But Stanley only looked back into the house nervously before turning back to them.

“Let me go tell Richie we have company. Wait here?” They nodded and he disappeared through an archway. Through the open door, Eddie could see a large foyer; dark, hardwood floors, sun-faded wallpaper, and a grand staircase in the center of it all. At the top of the stairs, past the landing, was an immaculate stained-glass window. Eddie didn’t have to look at Bill to know that he was just as transfixed by it. The interior really wasn’t as bad as the outside, not by a long shot.

“Wha-what the h-hell?” Bill said, turning to Eddie. He didn’t get a chance to answer before Stanley returned.

“Come in, please. I’d offer you guys something to drink but we haven’t gotten a chance to go grocery shopping.” Inside, a small chandelier filled the foyer with golden light. Much of the second floor was covered in cobwebs, but, apart from that, the thick dust, and small portions of the house that looked mildewed or broken, Eddie couldn’t find much to complain about.

“Th-that’s alright. This p-place is pretty i-incredible.” Bill said.

“That’s one word for it.” Stanley laughed, but then his face scrunched. He craned his neck towards the archway he’d come through, looking for something. “That asshole said he’d come and say hi.” He cupped a hand beside his mouth, “Richie! Get out here and be social!”

“Are you sure you aren’t busy? We could come back some other time.” Eddie said.

“No, no, I was about to stop for the night anyway. I’m honestly really glad you came by; the distraction is much appreciated.” Stanley grinned at Eddie, his hazel eyes shining. “And Rich said he wanted to meet you two, he’s just taking his sweet-ass time.”

“I mean I do have a really sweet ass.”

Bill and Eddie turned to find the source of the voice.

Moving out of the darkness of the hallway, a silhouetted figure approached them. The form moved into the light of the chandelier, and leaned against the doorway.

Eddie would never admit it to another soul, but he couldn’t deny that in that moment, when his eyes found Richie’s, his breathing became short and his heartbeat strained against his chest. He tried not to, he really did, but his eyes swept up and down Richie’s tall frame several times. He wore dark jeans and a red Henley; both were speckled with white paint. Behind dark-rimmed glasses, blue eyes flicked back and forth between the three men standing in the foyer. Eddie was speechless.

“Not funny, Trashmouth.” Stanley rolled his eyes. “This is Bill,” Richie moved from his spot, stepping further into the light, and shook Bill’s hand. “and this is Eddie.” Stanley finished.

Richie shifted his attention; moving till he was inches from Eddie; the closeness was startling, and Eddie could only stare. Graying stubble was dusted across his strong jaw, a jaw that was tilted downward to meet Eddie’s gaze. His gaze—oh dear lord, look at those eyes; they were marbled stone, they were the ocean on a cloudy day, they were —

“Hey there, Eds.”

EDS?

“Eddie.” Eddie corrected. Richie let out a breathy laugh and kept giggling as he offered his hand. Eddie tried not to notice how his left eye closed slightly more than his right when he laughed. Cute.

Eddie mentally shook himself and finally joined hands with Richie. His mounting anger almost distracted from how sparks shot up his arm at the contact. Before he knew it, the handshake was over, but Richie hadn’t taken his eyes off of him.

“So, you two are here for the tour, huh? Well, welcome to Casa Tozier.” Mercifully, his eyes broke away from Eddie’s as he took in the large entry hall. “Stanney would be happy to show you around.”

“Are you sure you don’t mind the mess, Eddie?” Stanley interjected; genuine concern laced his words.

“Oh, well,” Eddie’s brain stuttered, unprepared for the attention, “I should be—”

“What’s wrong, Eds?” Richie asked.

Whether or not his tone was sincere, Eddie couldn’t tell. But what Eddie did know was that he already hated this man. He hated his stupid grin, he hated the nicknames, and most of all, he hated that he still flushed at the question. Eddie had to retaliate.

“Nothing, Dick. I’m just not a big fan of germs.” He gave Richie a saccharine smile, not caring that he was being childish. It must have worked, at least somewhat, because Richie’s grin faltered.

“Well,” Stanley clapped his hands together loudly, breaking the two out of their silent spar, “Bill, Eddie, let’s start the tour.”

Eddie didn’t know if he was relieved or upset; he almost wanted to keep arguing with Richie. He couldn’t explain it, but something in Richie’s eyes was exciting, and Eddie secretly hoped that there would be more arguments in the future.

Stanley led them around the large house. He described what they planned for the renovations, pointed out weak spots, and listed off what they had already accomplished. Eddie and Bill followed him, and Richie brought up the rear; occasionally commenting or making a crummy joke. Eddie couldn't be sure, since he didn't dare look back, but he could swear he felt Richie's eyes on him the entire time. Whether that was infuriating or intriguing, Eddie couldn't be sure.

They finished up the tour. It was late, and Bill and Eddie were both suppressing yawns. Bill did so because he didn't want to be rude; Eddie did so because he didn't want to hear Richie ask if it was 'past his bedtime' again.

Despite his original reservations, Eddie couldn't find much about the house to critique. In fact, he found himself awed by the old building, and he told Stan as much.

"I'm glad it wasn't as bad as you thought it would be." Stanley said. "I can't wait for you to see it when we've actually done some improvements."

Apropos of nothing, Richie spoke up.

"I've been cooped up inside all day, why don't I walk you two to your house?"

Eddie was stunned. The entire visit Richie had been snarky at best and confrontational at worst. Suddenly Richie was staring at the two of them—mostly Eddie—with a genuine question in his eyes. Eddie looked to Stanley; but found him looking just as confused.

"Um. Yeah, that's fine. I mean, it's only like a five second walk." Eddie said. Truthfully, he wasn't opposed to another five seconds with Richie; and he was far too tired to keep up the squabbling. But something about the way Stanley looked at Richie—as if he was searching for an ulterior motive buried behind his thick glasses—made Eddie nervous.

"Goodnight Bill, Eddie. Don't be strangers." Stan started down the hallway that led to the study; and Eddie didn't miss the way he kept glancing back at Richie.

"After you, Eds." Richie said. And just like that, nothing else mattered to Eddie. All that mattered in that moment, was how much he wanted Richie to shut the hell up. But Bill was already walking out the door, dragging Eddie behind him.

The walk didn't take five seconds; it took nine. When they arrived at their own porch, Bill was the first to speak.

"Th-thanks for sh-showing us around, Richie. I've got an e-early day tomorrow, s-so I r-really better be g-going. Goodnight." He said. He left them on the porch, turning on the overhead light behind him.

"Do you have an early morning too, Eduardo?" Richie asked. The dim glow above them cast soft shadows across their faces.

"I don't think I know you well enough for you to be giving me nicknames." Eddie said.

He was feeling weary; dissected under Richie's gaze. Why hadn't he just walked inside with Bill? Said he did have an early morning? Richie was taking in every inch of Eddie's face, and he hoped that the dying porch light didn't reveal the blush that was deepening across his cheeks.

"I don't know; I like it. A cute name for a cute guy."

Eddie was going to explode.

"Jesus Christ," he slid past Richie, backing through the doorway "you're fucking ridiculous. Does that normally work on other guys?"

"Is it working now?" Richie asked, lips quirking up.

"Not even a little bit," he lied. "Goodnight, Richie." He closed the door between them.

Out of Richie's assaying view, Eddie's knees became weak. He leaned back against the door, squeezing his eyes closed. He heard Bill walk up to him.

"D-did you ask h-him about the coffin?"

“FUCK!”

2. He's got the Hots for the Creep

Summary for the Chapter:

Stan holds a house warming party.

In the following weeks, Eddie didn't see much of Stanley. Every once in a while, he would catch him carrying a box or mowing the lawn, never stopping for more than small talk. More than once, however, Stan made sure to let Eddie know that he would love to hang out with him and Bill soon. Eddie accepted the promise and waited for Stan to make the first move.

Slowly but surely, the home next door looked more and more like, well, a home. Over a month had passed since the house tour when Stanley caught Eddie outside. He had stopped to marvel over their newly painted siding.

"Holy shit, Stan, this looks fantastic."

"Thanks." Stan said, clapping a hand on Eddie's shoulder. "So, uh, would you be interested in a get together at our place? Nothing big or anything, but we've done a lot and we wanted to celebrate."

"Is Bill invited?" Eddie asked. He hated going to social events alone.

"Of course. And honestly anyone else you want to invite... we don't know a lot of people." Stan admitted.

"I'd love to, and I'm sure Bill would too." Stanley gave him an appreciative smile. Eddie wondered how lonely he must be in a completely new state. "When will it be?"

"Me and Richie were thinking Saturday. Is that alright?"

"Sounds good." Eddie began walking home. "Oh, around what time?"

"After sundown."

“Mike, is this too formal?” Eddie gestured to the sweater vest and khakis he had put on.

“How formal did he say it was? Wait am I underdressed?” Mike played with the end of his button-down, suddenly looking nervous.

“I don’t know, I didn’t ask. Fuck, I’m gonna go change.”

“N-nope, don’t even th-think about it, Kaspbrak.” Bill descended the stairs, dressed more casually than Mike or Eddie. “Eddie y-you look fine, Mike y-you look fantastic, as al-always.” He raised up on tiptoe and kissed Mike’s cheek. A momentary flicker of jealousy showed itself on Eddie’s face, then disappeared. He was too preoccupied with social anxiety to dwell on how lonely he was.

“This guy isn’t gonna be weird about us, is he?” Mike asked Bill.

Eddie had heard plenty of horror stories from the two of them over the years. How quickly people would turn on them once they made it clear they were together. It was horrifying, but he could only truly commiserate in theory. The fact of the matter was that Eddie Kaspbrak, as gay as he knew he was, had never even kissed a man. Being closeted for most of your life (and being particular as hell) would do that to a person.

The all-too-familiar spiraling feeling—the one that told Eddie he somehow wasn’t queer enough, the one that told him he would be alone forever—was washing over him. But Bill had begun speaking; Eddie shook himself out of his panic and caught the end of it.

“—Stan and R-Richie are a thing anyway.” He finished, rubbing Mike’s arm comfortingly. Eddie felt anything but comfortable.

“What?!”

“I s-said I th-think Stan and Richie are t-together.” Bill stated matter-of-factly. Eddie’s face twisted up like he had tasted something sour.

“What the hell makes you think that?” Eddie barely refrained from yelling.

“Eddie, d-didn’t you see the w-way Richie k-kept leaning on Stan?

And ‘live-in carpenter’? That’s so n-not a thing.” Bill finished. Mike had visibly relaxed. Eddie wished he could be relieved for his friends; safe spaces hadn’t always been easy for them to come by. But instead, he felt a pit grow in his stomach.

They arrived early, but Stan still greeted them happily. The entry hall had been cleaned and polished, and new furniture was spread out around them. Stanley led them to the sitting room where Richie was reclined across a leather chaise lounge.

Since their first meeting, Eddie had resigned himself to being nervous around Richie; after all, no one had ever flirted with him so overtly before, especially not someone Eddie was that attracted to. As infuriating as it was, no amount of Richie’s bad jokes or stupid nicknames could have detracted from that attraction. But if Bill was right—and he always was—Richie was taken. Eddie didn’t feel nervous; he felt hurt.

“Is there something on my shirt, Eds?” Eddie’s train of thought derailed. Richie was comically stretching out his sweater, looking for a stain he knew wasn’t there.

“Apart from that gaudy pattern? No, nothing.” Everyone but Eddie laughed. This was going to be a long night.

More guests began to arrive; mostly neighbors. Eddie only recognized one of them: Patty from across the street. She was situated between Bill and Stan on the couch; the three of them deep in a conversation Eddie couldn’t hear.

Mike and Eddie had long since sequestered themselves into a corner. They didn’t chat much, choosing instead to people-watch. There was one person in particular that Eddie couldn’t help but look back to. Richie stood across the room, surrounded by all the other guests. His voice boomed through the room, making it near impossible for Eddie to ignore.

Everyone seemed to love him; he joked, they laughed, he smiled, and the neighborhood smiled with him. The pit in Eddie’s stomach grew as he watched Richie. Maybe he hadn’t been flirting with Eddie. Maybe he was just being himself. Eddie suddenly felt very foolish.

“Stanny!” Richie said as he maneuvered through the crowd. He reached the couch and kneeled at Stan’s feet, taking his hands in his own. “Would you pretty-please do me a favor?” Stan rolled his eyes, but smiled, nonetheless. Eddie allowed himself a moment to be jealous; but only a moment.

“What is it, Richie?”

“Well, these lovely people were wanting to see the rest of the house, and I said I’d be happy to show them, but Beverly and Ben still aren’t here and—”

“And you want me to stay down here in case they come?” Stanley finished for him.

“Bingo!” He patted Stan’s knees and stood. “This way, folks. I’ll be your tour guide this evening.” He was backing out of the room; a throng of guests following behind him.

“You coming?” Mike asked.

“Nah, you go ahead. I’m not really in the mood for the Richie Tozier comedy hour.” Eddie said.

Slowly, everyone but Stan and Eddie had wandered off.

“Didn’t want another tour?” Stan asked.

“I guess you could say that.”

“Well I’m glad you’re keeping me company. Do you wanna sit down?” He patted the cushion beside him. Eddie moved to the seat without a word. “So Mike and Bill are a cute couple. I’m glad they came tonight.” Stan said. Eddie nodded fondly. “Is there someone special in your life, Eddie?”

“Nope.” He pursed his lips together. “It’s just me.”

“Oh. That’s pretty hard to believe.” Eddie laughed a cynical laugh.

“I’m starting to think I’m better off being single for the rest of my life.” Stanley frowned at that. “But, hey, if the right guy comes along,

you'll be the first to know." Eddie grinned; no real joy in his eyes. His ingrained self-loathing, combined with the fact that Richie—the one person to show any interest in him—was taken, did nothing to make Eddie optimistic about a future love life.

Stanley had been watching him, but now his eyes had fallen. He looked lost in thought.

"Eddie, this is probably the worst time to ask this... But, do you know if Patty is single?"

Eddie's soul left his body. He was vaguely aware of his eyes bulging, and the sound of his heartbeat circulating a dull rhythm in his ears, but he couldn't respond. Words would not form in his mouth, even if he wanted them to.

"Eddie? You alright?" He had gently placed his hands on Eddie's shoulders; it made him feel grounded enough to speak.

"What about Richie?" He uttered dumbly.

"What about Richie?"

"What about you and Richie? You're together aren't you?" Eddie said, confusion lacing every syllable. Stan paled.

When Richie returned, Stanley still hadn't stopped laughing. He was doubled over, one hand gripping Eddie's forearm. Eddie was starting to panic; Stan was in hysterics, and it was his fault.

"What did you do to him?" Richie was staring at Eddie, wide-eyed and amused.

"I didn't do anything!" Eddie crossed his arms defensively. The other guests began to file back into the sitting room as Stan finally calmed. He took in deep breaths, wiping the tears from his eyes.

"Don't worry about it, Rich; I'll tell you later." Stan said. "Thank you, Eddie, I needed that." He spotted Patty near the hors d'oeuvres, and left them unceremoniously.

Richie was still staring at Eddie.

“You didn’t come on the tour.” He said. If Eddie didn’t know better, he’d say he looked disappointed.

“I, uh, I thought Stan could use some company.” Eddie said, looking anywhere but Richie. The haze of assumptions and hurt had cleared, and Eddie felt that nervousness he thought he had prepared for.

“That’s okay, Eds. Stan deserves more friends like you.” Richie sounded genuine for the first time since they met. For that, Eddie could forgive the nickname.

“Thanks, Richie.” Eddie flushed despite himself. Richie was looking at him the way he had the night he walked Eddie home. It wouldn’t be overdramatic to say he was devouring Eddie with his eyes. But suddenly, his face changed, and excitement took over.

“Why don’t I give you a one-on-one tour? Come on, Eddie Spaghetti, there’s lots of stuff I want you to see.” Richie bounced enthusiastically, waiting for Eddie to respond.

“Okay, fine. I’ll come with you if you promise never to call me that again.”

“I can’t promise that.” Richie said. Eddie followed him anyway.

He led Eddie into the foyer, and started up the stairs; grinning like an idiot the entire time. Eddie slowed when they reached the stained glass that encompassed the landing. He couldn’t believe that something so beautiful could be hidden inside something so noisome.

“I love it, too.” Richie said, breaking Eddie from his trance. They looked at one another before glancing back at the rainbowed panes before them.

“I bet it looks gorgeous in the daylight.” Eddie marveled. He reached out, dragging a finger along the textured glass. Richie was silent, then. More silent than Eddie could ever imagine him being. He looked over and found him staring wistfully at the floorboards.

“It does.” He finally said. Before Eddie could worry if he’d said something wrong, Richie grinned at him. “Come over and see it anytime you want.” He moved away from Eddie then; walking

towards an open doorway. Eddie followed.

Richie flicked on a light switch as he stepped into a large study. Bookshelves covered the far wall, a new desk sat to their left, and a faded, leather couch to their right.

“What did you want to show me?” Eddie asked, moving to investigate the bookshelves. Only a couple of shelves contained actual novels; the rest were filled with comic books, board games, and action figures. “Surely you didn’t just want me to see your Shazam comics.”

“Well, no. Especially now that I know you wouldn’t appreciate them.” Richie gave him a disapproving look; Eddie rolled his eyes.

“Then what?” Eddie laughed.

“Honestly, I didn’t think I’d get this far... Oh, hey look at this area rug! It’s the only thing Stan actually let me pick out.” Eddie could tell. The rug was severely out of place; it looked like the 80’s threw up on it—all geometric pinks and turquoises covering an off-white base. It was exactly what he expected from Richie, and Eddie found it incredibly endearing.

“It’s, uh, it’s something. I like it. Reminds me of my childhood.” Eddie said, and his heart jumped a little because Richie was beaming at him now; a soft smile playing at the corners of his mouth. Eddie tried desperately not to read too much into that look, but trying seemed futile when Richie began to move towards him.

“Thanks for that, Eds.” He stepped along the garish rug, moving closer. As the space between them became smaller and smaller, the fluttering in Eddie’s stomach spread through his limbs till his whole body felt numb and prickly. Richie had to grace to look nervous too; his hands were shoved awkwardly into his pockets. Unfortunately, this did nothing to diminish the nerves that were wracking Eddie’s body.

“Thanks for what?” Eddie breathed.

“For being nice.” Richie said. He was so close that Eddie could count the gray hairs speckled across his chin; could now see that his blue

eyes were really the color of polished steel. In that moment, he wanted nothing more than to lean up and kiss the smirk off of Richie's face. But before he could, Richie was speaking again. "Didn't know you had it in you; normally you're so snarky."

"I'm snarky?" Eddie screeched. "God, you're unbelievable."

"You mean that in a good way, right?" Richie's eyes crinkled; his tongue poked out, wetting his lips. Eddie's eyes followed the movement, and Richie noticed. "I meant what I said, by the way."

"What?"

"That you're cute." Richie said, matter-of-factly. Eddie rolled his eyes, but he felt his body heat up. He hated how much Richie affected him. He wished he could explain it away; say that Richie just happened to be the first semi-attractive man to show any interest in him, but there was something more. Eddie couldn't explain it, but Richie tugged at something deep within him; it drew him in, made him want to be impossibly closer to him. Eddie didn't believe in love at first sight, didn't believe in shit like preternatural forces, but the way Richie made him feel almost had him believing in something.

Besides, it really, really didn't help that Richie was looking at Eddie like he wanted to eat him. It was maddening and exciting.

"Thanks... I guess." Eddie stared at the space between their feet.

"Hey, you okay, Spaghetti?"

"Don't call me that, dickhead." Eddie spat defensively.

"Don't call me dickhead, dickhead." Richie laughed. Eddie watched Richie's hand lift up slowly. It stopped for a second, hovering in midair, before rising again and resting along Eddie's jaw. It was a gentle touch, but Eddie could feel it down his spine. His eyes fluttered up to meet Richie's, and it was so nice for a moment... But then Richie's hand moved to Eddie's cheek, pinching the skin there.

"You're so fucking cute, Eds!" Eddie jerked out of his grasp, smacking at Richie's arms. "You know that, right?" Richie said fondly. They both stilled. Eddie's hand stopped swatting, finding purchase on one

of Richie's biceps. Richie's hand found Eddie's jaw again.

"That I'm cute?" Eddie asked. Richie gave him a small nod. "I wouldn't really call myself that." His hand tensed where it was touching Richie.

"Okay, okay, so not cute, but what about adorable? Devilishly handsome? Fucking hot—come on, Eds, work with me."

"I don't know, Richie... I never thought I was all that special..." Eddie stared up at Richie, and Richie stared right back. An emotion, something between confusion and hurt, flickered across Richie's face. The hand on Eddie's jaw trailed down to his neck; Eddie's heart thrashed inside his chest.

Richie's eyes shot down to where his fingertips ghosted over Eddie's pulse point. His gray eyes seemed to change.

"Is there something on my neck?" Eddie said. He shivered when Richie's thumb traced a line up and down his skin.

"Rich?"

He didn't respond.

"Richie, hey, Rich. What's wrong?" He gripped Richie's sweater, gently shaking him. His eyes lightened, and he stepped back quickly.

"I'm... I'm sorry, Eddie Spaghetti." He gave Eddie a tight grin, stepping away further. "I should get back to the party; Stan's gonna kill me for abandoning him." He turned on a heel and left.

Eddie just stared after him.

When he left the party (very soon after his interaction with Richie), he said goodbye to Stan and Patty, and told Bill he'd see him at home. Richie was back in his former position, surrounded by guests. Eddie avoided him like the plague. He knew he was bad with men, knew his flirting skills were nonexistent, but it still hurt like hell for Richie to just leave like that.

He made it home, showered, got in bed, and tried desperately to get

Richie's face out of his head; an effort that proved to be immediately useless. He was just about done feeling sorry for himself when he felt his phone vibrate. An unknown number popped up on the illuminated screen. A telemarketer. Perfect. Just what Eddie needed to cap off this terrible night. He swiped a finger across the screen, jerking the phone up to his ear a little too roughly.

"Look, I don't know how many times I have to tell you idiots to take me off of your fucking lists, but—"

"Damn, you're feisty." Richie's voice cut in, interrupting Eddie's outburst.

"Richie?" Eddie said, suppressing the urge to yell.

"Hey, Eduardo. I hope you don't mind, but I asked Bill if he'd give me your number." Eddie made a mental note to murder Bill in the morning. "I wanted to apologize." Richie said after a moment of dead air. Eddie was skeptical, but he remained silent, allowing Richie to continue. "I'm... Things are difficult for me right now, but I just wanted you to know that... fuck, I like you, Eddie. I know tonight didn't really end well but I just needed you to know that."

Eddie was speechless. He didn't know emotional whiplash could feel so good, but dammit if a stupid grin wasn't plastered across his face.

"Oh." Eddie whispered.

"Yeah, oh." Richie's laugh crackled across the line. "Speaking of 'oh,' guess what I found out?"

"Oh god, what?" Eddie asked, enraptured by how giddy he felt. Richie liked him too. Obnoxious, goofy, funny Richie liked him back, and it felt fantastic.

"Look out your window." Richie said. Eddie hesitated.

"What—why?"

"Just do it, Spaghetti." Eddie rolled his eyes, but got out of bed, moving to his window. He scanned the grass below, almost expecting to see Richie standing there with a guitar, singing an Italian serenade.

But the space between their houses was barren, and Eddie didn't know what he was looking for. Then, suddenly, the window across from his own lit up. Eddie looked up and saw Richie, standing there, with a phone pressed to the side of his face, staring at Eddie.

Eddie was immediately regretting his decision to sleep in his short shorts.

"We're window neighbors!" Richie said, jumping up and down excitedly.

Eddie shoved his curtains closed, sliding back into his bed.

"Go the fuck to sleep, Richie. I don't even want to know how you figured that out."

"Wait, wait, wait!" Richie said, anxiously. "Do you like me too, Window Neighbor?"

"Goodnight, dickhead."

3. To What do I Owe this Dubious Pleasure? Part 1

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie discovers Richie's dirty little secret.

Eddie ended their call and set his phone down. His mind was reeling from Richie's confession, and a fondness began to hum through his body. Eddie wondered if this was what it always felt like to want and be wanted in return.

He was pulled from his reverie when his phone vibrated beside him, buzzing. A new text illuminated the screen; Eddie could see that it was an unknown number, and every fiber of his being hoped that it was Richie again.

Unknown: it's sexy when you hang up on me

Eddie laughed, releasing a breath he didn't realize he was holding. He read the words over and over until his cheeks hurt from smiling so hard. He felt ridiculous; curled up in bed, giggling at the cheesiest text he had ever received. But it was hard to feel *too* ridiculous when he pictured Richie grinning proudly at himself; his eyes crinkled and his lips curled tightly. Eddie wondered if Richie would still be at his window, or if he peeked out of his curtains, would he see Richie there. Before he could wonder too much, he was leaving his bed and approaching the window.

Somewhere in the back of his mind, Eddie registered that it was sorta, kinda creepy to be spying on Richie without him knowing, but it would only be for a moment.

He slid a single finger in between the curtains, careful not to make his movements too obvious, and slowly parted the fabric, millimeter by millimeter, till an inch of glass was visible. Eddie situated himself behind the window; crouching till his eye was level with the separated length of curtain.

Across the way, Richie's bedroom light was still on. Eddie could see the floral pattern on Richie's comforter, the light on his side-table that didn't have a lampshade yet, and, most surprisingly, the red-headed woman who sat nonchalantly on Richie's bed.

Eddie's stomach lurched.

She was stunning; that was abundantly clear even from his limited vantage point. Bright blue eyes, a strong jawline, and plump lips—the complete opposite of Eddie. He tried not to read too much into that; he was upset enough already.

Just when he was about to crawl dejectedly back into bed—and stare at Richie's text till he either replied with a quick, succinct 'fuck you,' or cried himself to sleep—Richie himself sauntered into view.

The two smiled at one another, and Eddie hated the rush of jealousy that coursed through his body. Richie sat down on the bed, only inches away from the woman, and handed her a rolled-up towel. They were talking to each other, but Eddie couldn't make out any of their words. Richie made a dumb face—the one that meant he thought he was being funny—and the woman simply rolled her eyes and smiled at him. Eddie wanted to stop watching, wanted to stop torturing himself and leave before this turned voyeuristic, but his legs were rooted to the floor.

Richie must have said something characteristically vulgar then, because the redhead reached up with her folded towel and hit him playfully over the head. He feigned shock, but a huge smile was playing at the corners of his mouth as he wrangled the cloth out of her hands. As they both laughed, Richie splayed the towel across her thighs. As baffled as he was by the action, Eddie couldn't help but notice how non-sexual it seemed. It was almost clinical.

While Eddie was busy reflecting on towel placement, Richie was holding out his hand, palm up; a silent request directed at the redhead. She readily rolled back the sleeve of her shirt and placed her arm into Richie's waiting hand. When Richie brought his open mouth down onto her pale wrist, it was all Eddie could do to squeeze his eyes shut and swallow down the angry tears that stung his eyes.

His hand had begun to shake violently where it held back the curtain. Fearing that the unsteady movement would draw attention and give him away—effectively adding insult to injury—Eddie opened his eyes to make sure his cover wasn't blown. That's when he noticed the expression on the woman's face. Though a trained look of stoicism was fixed across her elegant features, there was no mistaking the occasional wincing of pain.

Eddie couldn't help himself. His eyes shot down to Richie's lips in time to see him pull away from the wrist that he had clasped so gently. Something was... off. Horrifyingly off. Because behind the curvature of Richie's flushed lips, two long, unmistakable fangs jutted downward. His tongue flicked up across the sharp teeth, and Eddie shivered. Richie—smartass, adorable, charming, Richie—looked preternaturally inhuman, and Eddie could feel his heartbeat throbbing in his temples, could feel the nausea of pure, unadulterated fear settling in his stomach.

He couldn't look at Richie's mouth any longer; he was overcome with some instinctual fear that settled into his very core, and he knew he had to run away. But his legs became numb as dread filled his body like water in a bucket; he couldn't flee if he tried.

His eyes flashed desperately around, searching for an ounce of human normalcy to ground him, but all he could see were Richie's red-rimmed, *yellow eyes* as they stared down at the redhead's arm. Before he could stop himself, Eddie's panicked eyes moved to follow Richie's gaze. Maroon liquid pumped out and across the woman's smooth skin, dripping down onto her covered lap.

Oh. That's what the towel's for, Eddie thought as his limbs dropped helplessly and his eyes rolled back into his head.

Notes for the Chapter:

This was supposed to be a longer chapter, I swear, but life got in the way for a while there. Should be posting more regularly now.